

POLICY NO: 4.1.30

PROTOCOLS FOR "ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY" AND "WELCOME TO COUNTRY" TO RECOGNISE ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND HISTORY

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

- The process of '*Welcome to Country*' and '*Acknowledgement of Country*' recognises the unique position of Aboriginal people in Australian culture and history. Aboriginal people are the original custodians/traditional owners of the land. It is important this unique position is recognised and incorporated as part of official protocol and events to enable the wider community to share in Aboriginal culture and heritage, facilitating better relationships between Indigenous people and other Australians.
- The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that the correct protocols are used by the City of Vincent for the two ceremonies.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. SCOPE

These guidelines apply to all City of Vincent Officers responsible for organising events/functions/ceremonies/meetings where '*Acknowledgement of Country*' or '*Welcome to Country*' ceremonies should be included in official proceedings.

2. THE 'ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY'

(i) Definition of Acknowledgement of Country

An '*Acknowledgement of Country*' is an acknowledgement of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodians/traditional owners of land in order to pay respect to them. It is a means by which all people can show respect for the Aboriginal culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the traditional custodians have with the land. The '*Acknowledgement of Country*' can be performed by any person, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

(ii) Appropriate Place

When planning an official event, City of Vincent Officers should ensure that an '*Acknowledgement of Country*' is delivered where possible. In particular, an '*Acknowledgement of Country*' should be given by a speaker at the beginning of the event.

(iii) Events

Events for '*Acknowledgement of Country*' include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Significant events where members of the public, representatives of governments and/or the media are present;
- Council Meetings;
- Forums, Briefing Sessions and Major Workshops where the public are present; or
- Conferences and seminars.

(iv) Phraseology

Particular wording used for an 'Acknowledgement of Country' may differ, and includes (but is not limited to) any of the following suggested wording:

- *I would like to acknowledge the Wadjuk people from the Nyoongar nation who are the traditional owners/custodians of this land we are meeting/gathering on today;*
- *I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Nyoongar People, on whose land we are meeting, and pay my respects to the Elders both past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Indigenous Australia; or*
- *I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the Nyoongar People; or*
- *I respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional owners of this land upon which we are meeting, the Nyoongar People; or*
- *I would like to acknowledge the indigenous peoples of Perth and particularly honour and thank the traditional custodians of the land upon which we meet, the Nyoongar People. Thank you for providing access to this part of your country; or*
- *The City of Vincent affirms that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people are the indigenous peoples of Australia. Before we proceed with today's meeting, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we meet; or*
- *I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Nyoongar People, and pay my respects to Elders, past and present.*

3. THE 'WELCOME TO THE COUNTRY'

- (i) A 'Welcome to the Country' is where the traditional Aboriginal custodians welcome people to their land by providing historical and cultural information to the people in attendance. Steps should be taken to ensure that the appropriate representative is invited to perform the 'Welcome', because it is a significant recognition and a formal process. The 'Welcome to Country' is a right of the local traditional owners and not a privilege. A 'Welcome to Country' should always occur at the opening of the event in question, preferably as the first item in the order of proceedings.
- (ii) Initiation of negotiation to perform a 'Welcome to Country' ceremony is to occur only after receiving the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.
- (iii) Events for a 'Welcome to Country' include (but are not limited to) the following:
- Significant events involving the State or Federal Government;
 - Significant civic functions;
 - Opening of new significant buildings;
 - Significant launches; and
 - Other significant ceremonies.

- (iv) The *'Welcome to the Country'* is conducted by a recognised representative/s of the local Aboriginal community (such as an Elder of the Nyoongar People) who welcomes the delegates and all in attendance. If there is uncertainty as to whether an 'acknowledgement' or 'a welcome' is appropriate, advice should be sought from the Chief Executive Officer.
- (v) A *'Welcome to the Country'* may consist of a single speech by the representative of the local Aboriginal community, or it may also include a performance of some description. Performances may include a:
 - Traditional Welcoming Song;
 - Traditional Dance;
 - Didgeridoo performance;
 - "smoking" ceremony; or
 - combination of any of the above. (In most communities, there are performing artists who are regularly available for such occasions).
- (vi) It is necessary for the speaker who follows immediately after the *'Welcome to Country'* ceremony to provide a response. Part of the response should acknowledge the person who delivered the *'Welcome to Country'*. The following is a recommended response: *"I respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional owners of this land on which we are meeting, the Nyoongar People. It is a privilege to be standing on Nyoongar country"*.

4. NEGOTIATING A 'WELCOME TO COUNTRY'

- (i) When planning an official event, organisers should ensure that a *'Welcome to Country'* is delivered, where appropriate to do so. Where it is not possible to have a *'Welcome to Country'*, an *'Acknowledgement of Country'* should be delivered instead.
- (ii) When organising a *'Welcome to Country'* for an event, organisers need to provide the traditional owners with information on the theme and purpose of the event. Elder/s representing the traditional owners may choose to include in the 'Welcome' a traditional focus to the theme or purpose of the event. Organisers should also respectfully request that any 'Welcome' made in an Aboriginal language be translated into English so that the audience can understand the welcoming message.
- (iii) The organiser should ensure that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the presenter is well looked after.
- (iv) The City representative should make provision for those performing the 'Welcome' and artistic performances to be paid. These fees need to be negotiated prior to the event.
- (v) Other considerations may include the arrangement of transport for the Elder/s and ensuring that refreshments are provided.

5. CULTURAL PROTOCOLS TO BE OBSERVED

There are certain indigenous protocols that must be observed:

- (i) The practice of not mentioning the name of a deceased Aboriginal person, or displaying photographic images of a deceased person unless agreed and approved by the relevant family;
- (ii) Sensitivity to knowledge that is specific to gender (commonly referred to as 'Women's Business' or 'Men's Business');
- (iii) Appropriate acknowledgement of guest artists that are either from or supported by the local community;
- (iv) In most cases, members of the Aboriginal community will advise staff of intrusive behaviour and/or if they are not permitted to discuss the protocol or ceremony with staff because of age, gender, status etc. If in doubt, advice should be sought from the Chief Executive Officer.

6. DISPLAY OF FLAGS AT EVENTS WITH 'WELCOME TO COUNTRY'

- (i) The organiser should ensure that the presenter has the opportunity to display the following flags where he or she delivers a *'Welcome to Country'* speech:
 - an Aboriginal flag;
 - a Torres Strait Islander flag;
 - an Australian flag;
 - a Western Australian flag.
- (ii) Where the above flags are displayed at an event, the flags shall be placed left to right from the perspective of the audience: the Australian flag, the Western Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag.

Date Adopted:	November 2010
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